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ABSTRACT

This booklet, one of a series of 34 on promising programs in childhood education prepared for the White House Conference on Children, December 1970, describes the Philadelphia Teacher Center--a staff development program which provides a place where teachers can make things for their classrooms and exchange ideas with others. The Center provides the teachers with materials and tools and conducts workshops. Teachers can come to the Center on release time or after school to make educational games and materials for their classrooms. The Center contains examples of things that can be made with the materials provided and a library of professional books and manuals with ideas for learning games and materials. (RT)

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Model Programs

Childhood Education

DEC 2 0 1970

Philadelphia Teacher Center
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL COMMUNICATION

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Model Programs

Childhood Education

OE-20163

Philadelphia Teacher Center
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

A staff development program which provides a place where teachers can make things for their classrooms and exchange ideas with others

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
Elliot L. Richardson, *Secretary*
Office of Education
Terrel H. Bell, *Acting Commissioner of Education*
OFFICE OF ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
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FOREWORD

This booklet is one of 34 in a series of promising programs on childhood education prepared for the White House Conference on Children, December 1970. The series was written under contract by the American Institutes for Research for the Office of Economic Opportunity, and the Office of Child Development and the Office of Education, U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare.

Within the broad area of childhood education the series includes descriptions of programs on reading and language development, the disadvantaged, preschool education, and special education. In describing a program, each booklet provides details about the purpose; the children reached; specific materials, facilities, and staff involved; and other special features such as community services, parental involvement, and finances. Sources of further information on the programs are also provided.

The second floor of an old brick school building in downtown Philadelphia has been set aside for the Philadelphia Teacher Center--a workshop where teachers can make materials for their classroom, explore new curriculum ideas, and discuss problems and successes with children. The Center is equipped with inexpensive materials not generally available to teachers, such as heavy cardboard, wood, ceramic tiles, and cloth samples. Using these inexpensive materials and simple tools, teachers build bookshelves, tables, animal cages, balances, puzzles, games, and other equipment to enliven their classrooms. As they become involved in making the materials, they become more aware of the relationship between the materials and children: they think about the needs of their students, examine the reasons why they are presenting an activity, explore different ways of using equipment, and gain insight into how children learn from interacting with objects. As they handle unfamiliar tools and materials, they also experience the same problems and feelings as their students while struggling to learn something new.

The Center offers workshops from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Wednesdays and Thursdays for teachers on release time from their district; informal open hours are from 3 to 8 p.m. on Wednesdays and Thursdays and 9 a.m. to 12 noon on Saturdays. Two or three

professional educators are always available to suggest ideas and provide assistance, but they do not try to tell the teachers what to teach or how to teach. Rather, they offer support in an informal, relaxed setting.

SUPPORT

The Center is supported by the Philadelphia School Board and the Early Childhood Education Study of the Education Development Center in Newton, Mass., a Head Start project which assists with the planning and development of learning environments for preschool and kindergarten children through workshops, publications, audiovisual materials, and consultive services. The Philadelphia School Board allocates funds to support the day workshops, while the Early Childhood Education Study supports the evening and Saturday morning sessions. The Philadelphia Teacher Center is one of five regional workshops established through the Early Childhood Education Study, the others being located in Boston, New York City, Los Angeles, and Boulder, Colorado.

HISTORY OF THE CENTER

The Philadelphia Teacher Center was started in 1967 in the basement of a school, with after-school workshops held 1 day a week. Soon teachers from other schools began coming and, in

response to requests, several traveling workshops were held in different parts of the city. The next year the Center moved to another school where it had more space. There the 2-day program of all-day workshops for teachers on release time and an after-school program were started. In 1969-70 the program moved into its present location at the Durham School, an old unused school near a poverty area.

DAY WORKSHOPS INTRODUCE THE CENTER TO TEACHERS

The districts in the Philadelphia area give their teachers release time to attend the day workshops; substitute teachers are hired to teach their classes. Most participants are preschool, kindergarten, or early elementary school teachers, although other persons, including college students and teachers of older children, have attended. Workshops are arranged by teacher supervisors and other interested people, and are limited to 15 to 20 in a group.

The workshop is conducted in two large rooms at the Center--a shop and a craft room. The shop is equipped with several work benches and tools--including a table saw, band saw, sander, drill press, hammers, and files. The shop is also stocked with supplies of heavy cardboard, wood, and chicken wire. Scattered around the

room are examples of things that can be made with these materials--bookshelves, balances, and animal cages. The craft room has tables and chairs, a welcome pot of hot coffee, games and displays, and equipment and supplies to make materials. Also in the room are brightly decorated shoe boxes--the "Shoe Box Labs," each containing a learning game or activity for children; a sewing and handicrafts area with a sewing machine, a loom, and several small popsicle stick looms; shelves with samples of toys, such as puzzles made by cutting up magazine pictures pasted on cardboard; and supplies, including large boxes of tiles, cardboard, and other scrap materials.

CARDBOARD CARPENTRY

As teachers come in, they generally browse around the rooms or sit down and talk with the other teachers over a cup of coffee. When all the group has arrived, the staff talks to them about the purpose of the Center and some of the things they can make there. They explain Cardboard Carpentry--involving the use of Tri-Wall (an inexpensive sturdy triple-layer cardboard which can easily be sawed and assembled) to make items for the classroom. Painted with enamel, Tri-Wall can be quickly cleaned with a damp cloth and can be repainted to suit changing needs. Puppet theaters are a popular use for Tri-Wall since they are easy to make, are much

less expensive than commercially available models, and can be folded for storage. The puppet theater can later be used as a post office, a store, a house, or whatever else is appropriate for the teacher's plans. Tri-Wall is also used to make bookshelves, tables, chairs, carts, room dividers, and many other items.

SHOE BOX LABORATORIES

The staff also explains the Shoe Box Labs, which contain learning activities made from inexpensive materials, such as a counting game using beans and an egg carton, a multiplication game made with ceramic tiles, and a beginning graphing game using wooden cubes. So many uses have been found for these wooden cubes that the Center uses 2,000 each week! The Shoe Box Labs are clearly labeled with such catchy titles as "The Winning Touch" or "Pot-of-Gold"; instructions for using the materials are printed on the inside of the box lid. Shoe Box Labs are easy to make, convenient to store, and designed to meet the particular needs and interests of the teacher's students. A staff member demonstrates how several of the Shoe Box Labs can be used with children. For example, in the game "Build-a-House" the box contains wooden cubes and half a dozen irregularly shaped building plots made of construction paper. The child "builds" a house on the plot using wooden blocks as rooms. After he has made several houses the teacher might ask,

"Which house takes up the most space?" or "If you want to plant a hedge around the houses, which house would need the longest hedge?" Through manipulation of wooden cubes, the child explores the concepts of area and perimeter.

The staff also explains about the Center library, which contains both professional books and manuals with ideas for learning games and materials. Teachers are then free to make anything they want. For teachers who need help to get started, a staff member might ask, "What age children do you teach?" or "What are your students having problems with?" The staff member would then suggest games the teacher could make which are appropriate for the teacher's needs.

TEACHERS TEACH OTHER TEACHERS

Beginners in the workshop often copy the models on display in the room, while those familiar with the tools often design new items to meet their specific needs. In the craft room teachers look through the Shoe Box Labs and start to make their own games, puzzles, and toys. A staff member might work with a group of teachers who are interested in a particular material and show them how it can be used in the classroom. As teachers work, they exchange ideas. Teachers learn from each other as they share

experiences, discussing what works in their classrooms and why. The workshops often include films which further stimulate discussion. One of the staff members is an expert in the field of reading, another is a mathematician, and a third has a background in social studies. They are always ready to answer questions and discuss curriculum, teaching techniques, and special concerns of the teachers.

In addition to these unstructured workshops, the Center also offers more formal workshops on particular topics, such as mathematics, where the teachers become involved with materials and learn how newspaper, construction paper, and other inexpensive supplies can be used in the classroom.

INFORMAL OPEN HOURS

Teachers attending a weekday workshop are invited to return on a Wednesday or Thursday evening or a Saturday morning. The Center is open to everyone during this time--teachers from public and private schools, student teachers, parents, and other members of the community. An average of 20 to 25 people drop in for each of these sessions to make things, to get new ideas, or just to talk. Outside resource people come to the Center at least once a month to offer instruction in their specialty, such as working with

clay, making jewelry, or playing the guitar. A monthly newsletter keeps teachers informed of programs at the Center.

TEACHERS LEARN THROUGH DOING

Teachers learn in the process of making things. One teacher rediscovers the meaning of diameter and radius in making a circular table; another becomes more aware of the relationship between a two-dimensional drawing and a three-dimensional form as she converts a sketch into a bookshelf; a third explores the concepts of space relationships, area, and volume while constructing a puzzle from wooden cubes.

The staff encourages the teachers to think about what they are making by asking questions. For example, when a staff member showed a teacher how to make a balance, he said, "We have to drill a hole in the middle of this board; so we must find the midpoint." Using a ruler, the teacher learned that the board measured 7 7/8". When the staff member asked what half of that is, the teacher started looking around for paper and a pencil to figure it out. Then the staff member flipped the ruler over to the metric side and pointed out that 7 7/8" is the same as 20 centimeters, which can easily be divided by 2. The teacher then understood how much easier it is to do this kind of operation using the metric system

and how important it is to use the metric system in his own classroom. He also saw how the impact of this experience was greater as a teaching technique than a lecture on the metric system.

Teachers also rediscover what it is like to be a student. A staff member commented, "It's interesting to watch teachers when they first make things. Oftentimes they begin by telling me, 'Oh, I can't make that. Why I've never had a power tool in my hand before; I've never used a saber saw!' So then I have to convince them to try, and I remind them, 'Well, what do you tell your children when they say they can't do things?'" Another staff member has found that at almost every workshop where the teachers are handling unfamiliar tools or materials one of them will say, "Now I see why the kids have trouble."

Teachers do not pay for any materials they use at the Center, although the average teacher uses supplies costing $5 at each workshop session. They can take to their classrooms what they make.

STAFFING

The Center is operated by two experienced educators who each spend about 30 hours per week conducting workshops and organizing

the Center. In the evenings and on Saturday morning they are assisted by another teacher. Other employees include a secretary, a college student who works as an apprentice at the Center for 3 days a week, and a helper who works about 12 hours each week preparing the newsletter and managing the library. In addition, an industrial supply man works 12 hours weekly picking up waste materials from industries and army surplus and distributing it to the Center and other centers in the area.

FUNDING

The Center costs about $60,000 per year to operate. The Philadelphia School Board provides $40,000 for the day workshop from funds from title I, Elementary and Secondary Education Act; the Early Childhood Education Study provides $20,000 to support the after-school hours. The district in which the Durham School is located contributes the space and maintains the building at no cost to the Center. Approximately two-thirds of the budget is spent on salaries and fees for special workshop personnel, and the remaining one-third is used to buy consumable supplies and to replace equipment.

Center staff estimated that it would cost approximately $20,000 to establish a new center operated by one teacher.

NEW CENTERS ARE OPENING

Services provided by the Philadelphia Teacher Center are very much in demand. In 1969-70, 1,500 teachers came to the Center at least once, and the workshop calendar is usually signed up several months in advance. The Center has proven so popular that four similar centers have been started in Philadelphia to serve other areas. The Philadelphia Teacher Center has developed the following guidelines for an effective center:

- A center should support adults concerned with children's growth as they seek information and take responsibility for children's learning.
- A center should be a place where people can learn as children do, from their own experience doing what is important to them.
- A center should have a warm atmosphere, serving the interests of a broad community and open to all.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For additional information on workshops and a catalog of films, publications, and slides, write:

Dr. Allan Leitman, Director
Early Childhood Education Study
55 Chapel Street
Newton, Mass. 02160
(617) 969-7100 x 253

Arrangements can be made to visit the Philadelphia Teacher Center on Wednesday, Thursday, or Saturday mornings through:

Dr. Donald Rasmussen
or
Mrs. Gina Hartell
Philadelphia Teacher Center
Durham School
16th and Lombard Streets
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19146

GPO : 1970 O - 410-156

MODEL PROGRAMS--Childhood Education

This is one in a series of 34 descriptive booklets on childhood education programs prepared for the White House Conference on Children, December 1970. Following is a list of the programs and their locations:

The Day Nursery Assn. of Cleveland, Ohio
Neighborhood House Child Care Services, Seattle, Wash.
Behavior Analysis Model of a Follow Through Program, Oraibi, Ariz.
Cross-Cultural Family Center, San Francisco, Calif.
NRO Migrant Child Development Center, Pasco, Wash.
Bilingual Early Childhood Program, San Antonio, Tex.
Santa Monica Children's Centers, Calif.
Exemplary Center for Reading Instruction, Salt Lake City, Utah
Dubnoff School for Educational Therapy, North Hollywood, Calif.
Demonstration Nursery Center for Infants and Toddlers, Greensboro, N.C.
Responsive Environment Model of a Follow Through Program, Goldsboro, N.C.
Center for Early Development and Education, Little Rock, Ark.
DOVACK, Monticello, Fla.
Perceptual Development Center Program, Natchez, Miss.
Appalachia Preschool Education Program, Charleston, W. Va.
Foster Grandparent Program, Nashville, Tenn.
Hartford Early Childhood Program, Conn.
Philadelphia Teacher Center, Pa.
Cognitively Oriented Curriculum, Ypsilanti, Mich.
Mothers' Training Program, Urbana, Ill.
The Micro-Social Preschool Learning System, Vineland, N.J.
Project PLAN, Parkersburg, W. Va.
Interdependent Learner Model of a Follow Through Program, New York, N.Y.
San Jose Police Youth Protection Unit, Calif.
Model Observation Kindergarten, Amherst, Mass.
Boston Public Schools Learning Laboratories, Mass.
Martin Luther King Family Center, Chicago, Ill.
Behavior Principles Structural Model of a Follow Through Program, Dayton, Ohio
University of Hawaii Preschool Language Curriculum, Honolulu, Hawaii
Springfield Avenue Community School, Newark, N.J.
Corrective Reading Program, Wichita, Kans.
New Schools Exchange, Santa Barbara, Calif.
Tacoma Public Schools Early Childhood Program, Wash.
Community Cooperative Nursery School, Menlo Park, Calif.

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